United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ President of Bosnia and Herzegovina signs military part of peace agreement put forward by Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference; agreement on matters "relating to Constitution" also reached; talks on other issues to continue at Headquarters.

+ Deputy Foreign Minister of Russian Federation, at press conference at Headquarters, announces setup of peace-keeping mechanisms in territory of former Soviet Union on ad hoc basis.

+ Cease-fire committee, under chairmanship of ONUSOM II and UNITAF, begins process of disarming warring Somali factions.

+ United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia to grant full access to its broadcasting facilities to all political parties to express their ideas "freely and equally".

+ Austria protests continuing blockade of Danube river by barges from Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) resulting in complete halt to navigation and interruption of Danube/Black Sea traffic.

+ Settlement problems are assuming worrisome dimensions in industrialized nations and developing countries, says new Chairman of Preparatory Committee for 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

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Following today's meetings on former Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance, Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yugoslavia, told correspondents that the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic, had signed the military part of the peace agreement for that country put forward by Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. He also informed correspondents that a major agreement had been reached by the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Government "on matters relating to the Constitution". However, he said, the "map issue" was still being considered and further talks were necessary with all parties concerned.

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Also speaking to correspondents, Lord Owen, the European Community negotiator, stressed that while the signing by the Bosnian Government of the military part of the agreement was a major step, the talks would continue on other issues. "One of the hardest tasks is going to be to stitch this country together again and get people who have been fighting in such a vicious way to work together in a government", he said. He expressed the hope, however, that an overall agreement could be reached in the next couple of days.

At a press briefing earlier today, Fred Eckhard, spokesman for the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on Yugoslavia, recalled that, with the signing today of the military part by the Bosnian Government, all three parties to the conflict had now agreed to two of the three elements of the peace plan -- an important step towards "the ultimate goal of getting a political agrement on which a meaningful cease-fire and a cessation of hostility could be based". The missing piece was the agreement on the map, which would delineate the 10 provinces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, Mr. Eckhard cautioned, the military agreement could not be implemented separately, since the three parts of the agreement were interrelated.

Today's agreements followed talks held all day at Headquarters by the two Co-Chairmen, Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, with the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic, his Prime Minister, Mile Akmadzic, and his Foreign Minister; with a delegation led by Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader; and with Mate Boban, the Bosnian Croat leader. The Co-Chairmen also held talks with British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd.

The Council was holding consultations on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina this evening.

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The Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov, announced today that peace-keeping mechanisms in the territory of the former Soviet Union were presently being set up and formed through specific arrangements between the parties concerned on a case-by-case basis.

At a press conference at Headquarter today, Mr. Lavrov said Russia was participating in the efforts to settle all the conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union -- Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan -- because it wanted to strengthen security in the territory and ensure stability and respect for Human Rights.

There were two types of peace-keeping operations currently carried out in the former Soviet Union, he said. The first was based on ad hoc arrangements between the peace-keeping forces and the conflicting parties. In a number of cases, he said, their mandate provided for possible use of force. To date, such arrangements were in effect in South Ossetia, Trans-Dniester region, Abkhazia, and Tajikistan.

The second type of operation was based on multilateral agreements reached in the context of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), signed by the

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Heads of State of CIS in Kiev last March. This was being set up for the first time in Tajikistan at the request of the Tajik Government.

Mr. Lavrov also stressed his country's willingness to cooperate with the United Nations and the CSCE in peace-keeping, as those two organizations could play an important role in supporting and training peace-keeping contingents in the former Soviet Union.

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Under the chairmanship of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (ONUSOM II) and the United States-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF), a cease-fire committee set up to disarm warring Somali factions has met to review responses from those factions regarding their weapons inventory lists, transition sites for personnel and light weapons and cantonment sites.

According to a United Nations spokesman today, 14 factions took part in the review process and ONUSOM had been given "faction maps" on which to pinpoint the sites where the weapons were stored.

The committee, which was established under the Addis Ababa agreements on Somalia, was expected to hold its next formal meeting around 30 March.

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The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) today launched its programme of granting full access to its broadcasting facilities to all political parties in Cambodia so that they could express their ideas as "freely and equally" as possible, according to Eric Falt, the spokesman for UNTAC.

Under the "equal access, equal time" programme on Radio UNTAC, which would start on 7 April, each political party would be allotted two five-minute slots per week. The parties would be given the choice to pre-record their statement on a tape and deliver it to the division or they could use Radio UNTAC's studio facilities for the recording.

Elections for the constituent assembly are to be held from 23 to 25 May.

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Austria has protested the continuing blockade of the Danube river by barges from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), saying it has resulted in a complete halt to navigation on the Danube and an interruption of the Danube/Black Sea traffic.

In a letter dated 2 March, the Austrian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Peter Hchenfellner, asked the Council to take necessary measures to remedy the situation as the blockade was causing severe economic damage to Austria and to the other countries on the river.

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He said the international community should not accept the behaviour of a State that "not only does not implement Security Council resolutions, but also tries -- through illegal measures -- actively to defy and frustrate them". S/25351

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Settlement problems were assuming worrisome dimensions in industrialized nations as well as in developing countries, the newly elected Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) said today.

Addressing the opening of the Committee's organizational session this morning, Robert Lloyd Wenman of Canada stressed that preparations for Habitat II must take into account the human settlements components of "Agenda 21" -- the action programme adopted at the Rio Summit last summer -- and called on Member States to hear the voices of the homeless of the world, the refugees and the displaced persons as well as "people who live in the streets of our own cities".

The conference, which is scheduled to be held from 3 to 14 June 1996 in Turkey, will address human settlements issues in the context of sustainable development and will formulate a global plan of action to improve the living environment of all people.

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